

S A F E T Y N O T E S

June 2013



Spokane Fireworks Ban

July 4th is still marred by the sight and sound of illegal consumer fireworks in and around Spokane. However, the holiday period is dramatically safer in our community since the ordinance that created the full ban on individual or amateur usage of fireworks was instituted in 1993.

In the 10 years prior to that ban, there was an **average** of 104 fireworks-caused fires just in the Spokane city limits during the 9-day period of June 28 through July 6. In the past 20 years, that average has held at an average of 5 fire incidents.

On a practical level for Spokane Fire Department, that means we are no longer having to “stack 9-1-1” calls because every crew is out fighting fireworks-caused fires and there is no one to quickly respond to a medical emergency created by a heart attack, stroke, or car crash.

For emergency room personnel in Spokane-area hospitals, it means an 83% reduction in the number of injuries caused by exploding fireworks. (Last year, none of the six persons treated locally were injured in the Cities of Spokane or Spokane Valley.) For homeowners, the dramatic reduction in fireworks-caused fires has encouraged families to vacation away from their home because they no longer feel the need to stay in town watering down the roof in fear of stray bottle-rockets.

Unfortunately, there are still people throughout the community who believe they have the right to celebrate their independence by defying the ordinance and disrupting the peace and safety of the neighborhood. Violators not only annoy neighbors and terrify pets, they also create a very disturbing environment for returning veterans who suffer from the effects of PTSD and unexpected noise or explosions. Nearly 700 calls were taken by Crime Check 509.456.2233 last year for fireworks violations in Spokane County.

Please post the Fireworks Notice attached to this newsletter so that your tenants will be clearly aware of the law and of your expectations that fireworks will not be used on or near your property. Fines for using any of the banned fireworks begin at \$513 in Spokane. Fines for having State-banned bottle rockets, missiles or firecrackers on Washington land outside of tribal reservations can reach \$1,000. Persons who ignite property with consumer fireworks are not only fined but are also responsible for any related property damage as well as fire department recovery costs. One stray bottle rocket can cost a fortune!

Fortunately, most citizens in our jurisdiction understand the dangers associated with amateur fireworks. They choose to enjoy a safe Independence Day and watch the public fireworks displays conducted by licensed pyrotechnicians at Riverfront Park and other public venues.





Little Things Cause Big Troubles

- ... pinched electrical cord sparks fire in a Seattle apartment building leaving one man dead and another injured from smoke inhalation.
- ... extension cord plugged into an outlet but not connected to any appliance starts fire that leaves two preschoolers dead.
- ... extension cord plugged into air conditioner started the fire that destroyed the home.
- ... candle ignites clothing in bedroom and takes the life of young girl.
- ... cigarette stubbed out in potted plant smolders before destroying large section of apartment complex.
- ... poorly addressed residence in apartment community delays paramedic response to heart attack incident.
- ... \$80,000 estimated fire loss caused by faulty dishwasher.
- ... www.cpsc.gov reports 1.3 million GE and Hotpoint dishwashers recalled in August 2012.
- ... stray barbecue lighter used by preschooler starts apartment fire.
- ... leaking propane unit on barbecue accelerates building fire that began on lower deck.

You can sign up for this monthly newsletter, ask a fire-related question or suggest a specific safety topic by contacting Jan Doherty at jdoherty@spokanefire.org or by calling 509.625.7058.



Be Sure to visit our website at
spokanefire.org

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Twitter and YouTube pages!





WARNING:



ALL FIREWORKS ARE ILLEGAL IN SPOKANE

\$513 Fine

+ Possible Cost of Fire Department Response & Damages

FIRECRACKERS, BOTTLE ROCKETS and MISSILES are NOT ALLOWED IN ANY PART OF WASHINGTON STATE (with the exception of some Indian Reservations in areas designated by the Tribal Council).

- ✓ Possession of firecrackers, bottle rockets and missiles is illegal throughout Washington State. They can be confiscated at any time.
- ✓ In addition to the fines and court costs, persons who start fires with fireworks are liable for restitution of damaged property and for recovery of Fire Department response costs.
- ✓ If it has to be lit, it is an illegal firework in Spokane. SPARKLERS are illegal: they burn at 1200° and cause serious injuries.
- ✓ PARENTS are responsible for damages associated with their children using fireworks.
- ✓ For violations of the ban, call CRIME CHECK at 456-2233.